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CHAPTER IV.

VRISHABADHRI MAHATMYA

or

The Thirumalirunjolaimalai Stala - Purana.

Christianity has its Christ, Mahomedanism its Prophet Mahomed, Buddhism its Gautama Sakyā Muni, Zoroastrianism its Zoroaster, Confucianism its Confucius, Taoism, its Lao-tze and so on for their founders, but, for Hinduism who can define or demonstrate a single founder for it? For, its religion is eternal, Sanathana, without a beginning and without any human origin. The Bible, The Koran, the Zend Avesta, the Tripitakas, the Confucian Analects, Dialogues etc were all teachings of the respective Prophets.

But there is no single man-expounded book for Hinduism. From the all - pervading, ever-existing, blissfull music of the spheres and from that which is beyond Nada, Bindu, and Kala were revealed the Four Vedas upon which the 18 Smritis, the 18 Puranas, the 18 Upa Puranas and the Ithihasas of the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha were but elucidatory commentaries. A study of the Srutis and the Upanishads for the more advanced, the Smritis for the less advanced and the Ithihasas and the Puranas for the ordinary is ordained. Since mere abstract Truths like God, Soul, Higher Worlds etc. and discussions of a metaphysical nature could not be easily comprehensible to the minds of the ordinary people, symbolic representations, stories of abstract matters, dogmas at some places, explanations of the fundamental abstracts, of the Srutis and Upanishads woven in an attractive form, atonce comprehensible and impressive in the Purnas and Ithihasas are intended for the common people. For, the Vedas themselves have to be explained only in the light of the Ithihasas and the Puranas.

इतिहास पुराणाभ्यां वेदं समुपप्लव्येत् ।

The Purana is, as it were, the magnifying glass through which we discern the mysteries of the Vedanta. Puranas may seem to contain certain inconsistent, inexplicable or contradictory statements. On this score the western educated scholars often condemn them. On the other hand the eastern scholars want the contents to be left unquestioned and expect a wholesale cent per cent belief in the statements contained therein. Both are two extremes. By a proper study and by a proper application they must be reasonably interpreted and correctly understood and the truths assimilated, without forgetting the fact that these various Text-Books as they were, are prescribed for men, according to the stages or standards of their evolution, culture and progress. What are these Puranas? Who wrote them? And what do they treat of?

That great sage Sri Vyasa is the Composer of the Puranas. His service to humanity requires notice. He knew the Absolute Brahman the Highest Being and the Ultimate Reality to be devoid of any attribute, any name or any form; but as a practical teacher, he knew too that the conception of the Absolute is not within the reach of any except a very few. He has hence written the Puranas, so that the Bhakta can by intensity of devotional exercise obtain the fruits of devotion and finally can by further effort attain even a knowledge of the Absolute Brahman, even through devotion just as by self-realisation. For practical wisdom which combined economy of effort and maximum of benefit by adopting the doctrine of the Absolute Brahman to the needs of the devotee without impairing in any way the truth of the doctrine, Sri Vyasa is inimitable. The goal "Nirguna" is thus reached through the easy pathway of "Saguna." The Puranas therefore only contain the message of the Vedanta. All our gratitude must therefore go forth to Sri Vyasa Bhagavan.

The definition of a Purana according to Amara Simha the Lexico-grapher in the court of Vikramaditya (56 B. C.) is as follows:—

सर्गश्च प्रतिसर्गश्च वंशोमन्वन्तराणि च ।
वंशानुचरितं चैवपुराणं पञ्चलक्षणम् ॥

i. e. a Purana should have 5 Lakshanas or characteristics or topics discussed (the Bhagavata Purana speaks of 10 Lakshanas).

- i. Sarga — Primary creation—cosmogony.
- ii. Pratisarga—Secondary creation—destruction or renovation with chronology.
- iii. Vamsa—Genealogy of Gods, Asuras and Patriarchs.
- iv. Manuantara—Sovereignty of Manu or periods of time called Manuantaras.
- v. Vamsanucharitam — History of Solar and Lunar Races and their descendants.

Other works define the word Purana as follows:—

पुरापिनवं ॥

There are three classes of Puranas which are sacred to either Brahma or Vishnu or Siva. They are said to contain 4,00,000 Stanzas as follows:—

<i>Brahma</i> (Rajasa)		<i>Vishnu</i> (Sattwa)	
1. Brahmanda	12,000	7. Vishnu	23,000
2. Brahma Vaivarta	18,000	8. Naradiya	25,000
3. Markandeya	9,000	9. Bhagavata	18,000
4. Bhavishya	14,500	10. Garuda	19,000
5. Vamana	10,000	11. Padma	55,000
6. Brahma	10,000	12. Varaha	24,000
	<u>73,500</u>		<u>1,64,000</u>

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Siva (Tamasa)

13.	Matsya	14,000
14.	Kurma	17,000
15.	Linga	11,000
16.	Vayoo (Siva)	24,000
17.	Skanda	81,000
18.	Agni	15,400
		<hr/> 1,62,500 <hr/>

Grand Total 4,00,000 Stanzas.

A reference to the contents (more important only) of the subjects treated in the above Puranas are noted below:—

1. *Brahmanda*—This exists in fragments only. Adhyatma Ramayana forms part of this. Chapters III, IV & IX of our Stala Purana of Sri Vrishabadhri Mahatmya form part of this Brahmanda Purana.

2. *Brahma Vaivarta*—Sri Krishna's history is the main portion; deals with the loves of the Gopis and Radha in the Brindhavana. Some think this to be sectarian. But three other parts of the Book deal with Brahma, Devi and Ganesa.

3. *Markandeya*. The chief subject dealt with here is Sri Chandi or Durga and her worship — a portion popular to day also and is a Parayana Book in many Hindu households. This Purana treats also of creations, Manus and Manuantaras. Birth, death, sin and Hell also are all dealt with. Episodes of Vrithra's death, Bala Deva's Penance, Harischandara Upa-kyanam, Vasistha's and Viswamitra's hostilities are all described.

4. *Bavishya*. Bavishya Uththara is a continuance from the main Purana. This is more or less a compendium of religious rites and worships. Varna Ashrama and Karma Bagha are detailed. Conversations between Krishna and Shanta, Vasistha,

Naradha and Vyasa and the greatness and glory of Sun and his worship are described. Maghas or Sun worshippers (from Saka Dwipa) are referred to herein.

5. *Vamana*. The efficacy of Linga Worship, Daksha's sacrifice, Kama's Dahanam, Uma's marriage, Karthikeya's birth, Vamana Avatara, and Bali's subjugation are some of the main items dealt with; besides these, this Purana is most important from the point of view that chapters II, V, VI, VII, and VIII of our Stala Purana of Sri Vrishabadhri Mahatmya form part of this Vamana Purana.

6. *Brahma*. Creation, Solar and Lunar Dynasties, Yoga and a description of certain Stalas of Orissa dedicated to Siva, Jagannadha and Surya are the chief themes herein.

7. *Vishnu*. In the first part, creation of Vishnu and Lakshmi, episodes of Dhruva, Prahlada etc., are noticed. In the second part the seven islands, the seven seas, various other regions, the planetary system etc, are dealt with. In the third part, Vedas, Puranas, Varnas, Ashramas, Acharas and the Karmas are elaborated. While in the fourth part a description of the Solar and Lunar dynasties is given. In the fifth and sixth, Krishna's life, Bakthi and Yoga are all very vividly portrayed.

8. *Naradiya*. There is also another work, Brihad Naradiya. Vishnu Bakthi, prayers to Vishnu, observance of various Vaishnavite rites and ceremonies are the chief subjects in this work.

9. *Bhagavata*. This is the holiest of all the Puranas. Cosmogony, greatness of Vasu Deva, various incarnations, various Bakthas' episodes, a history of the Solar and Lunar Dynasties, are all found here. But the main theme is Krishna's Life, His sports and activities.

10. *Garuda*. This treats of Creation etc. Main themes are Tantric rituals and observances and also the last obsequial rites. Astrology, palmistry, medicine etc., are also dealt with. The Original Garuda Purana is supposed to be lost.

11. *Padma*. Next to Skanda this is the most voluminous Purana. Vishnu Bakthi, use of Vaishnava marks on the body, Vishnu's incarnation, construction of images for Vishnu, Stala and Thirtha Viseshas besides the usual topics of Sarga and, Prathisarga etc, are found described.

12. *Varaha*. Vishnu Bakthi and Prayers for Vishnu etc., are the main themes here. Accounts of various Thirthas and Sthalas of Vaishnavic importance are also detailed. Chapters I and X of our Stala Purana of Sri Vrishabadhri Mahatmya form part of this Varaha Purana.

13. *Matsya*. Matsya Avathara, Parvathi Parinaya, Kumarasambava, and various Stala Mahatmyas besides the usual topics of Sarga, Prathisarga etc. form the subject of this Purana.

14. *Kurma*. Vishnu's incarnation, worship of Siva and Durga, and hymns to Maheswara etc are described besides the usual Puranic topics.

15. *Linga*. Linga's Udhbava and humbling of Brahma and Vishnu are the chief topics discussed here. The Vedas, proceeding from the Linga the great fiery effulgence, story of Siva's 28 incarnations just like the 24 incarnations of Vishnu and 24 incarnations of Buddhas before Gauthama Buddha, are all mentioned. Wilson's remark in his perface to Vishnu Purana (page Lxix) that the reference to the Linga worship "*is all mystical and spiritual*" is noteworthy.

16. *Vayoo*. This is also called Siva or Saiva purana; Efficacy of Yoga and the glory of Siva with whom the Yogin is to be finally united is its distinguishing portion. Other usual Puranic descriptions are also found.

17. *Skanda*. This exists in fragments only. Kasi Kanda describing Benares and its temple is very popular. Utkala Kanda relating to Orissa and Jagannath is Vaishnavic. Various Samhitas and Mahatmyas are interesting and instructive. Our Alagar Hills are referred to in the Sri Kuthala Mahatmya, in the Palni Sthala Purana, Giri Prakara Kandam and in the Brahma Samhita, Guru Geetha Adhyaya—all in this Purana.

18. *Agni*. Tantric rituals, mystical forms of Siva worship form the distinguishing characteristics of this work. Other subjects, that are dealt with here besides the orthodox Puranic topics are War, Laws, Medicine, Rhetoric, Prosody, Grammar as well as Vedas and Puranas.

The main and central truth in all the Puranas, whether their praises pertain to Brahma, Vishnu or Siva, is that they all deal with different aspects of one Absolute God. The Vishnu Purana (Amsa Ist Ch. 2) says

सृष्टिस्थित्यन्तकरणाद् ब्रह्मविष्णु शिवात्मिकाम् ।

ससद्भां याति भगवान् एकपवजनार्दनः ॥

i. e. there is but one God Janardhana who takes the title or designation of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva (सद्भां) as and when he takes up the functions of creation, protection, and destruction respectively. In the same work Amsa I Ch. 8, Siva is identified with Vishnu, and Lakshmi with Parvathi. Padma, Bhagavata, Kalki, Linga and various other Puranas are to the same effect. Sectarianism, and fanaticism is a deplorable development of the later days.

According to Vedanta Sutras the words Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are merely designations of the offices of creation, preservation and destruction, which are held by the developed competent and evolved souls, Brahma holding his office for hundred Brahmie years, Vishnu for 100 Vishnu years, (one day of Vishnu being equal to 100 years of Brahma) and Siva for

Hundred Siva years (one day of Siva being equal 100 Vishnu years.) Now when this book goes to the press the present holder of the office of Brahma has seen fifty years of life completely and has just entered his 51st year, first month, first Paksha, and the first day of it, we being in the second half of the 1st day in its 3rd Muhurta now and in the Kalpa called Sweta Varaha Kalpa, the Manvantara being Vaivaswata (7th of the 14th), and in the 28th Mahayugah of the 71 Mahayugas (or Ashtavimshatitame) and in Kali Yuga of which 5041 years are now gone we being in the 5042nd Year 13—4—1941. Some may think that this is too much to ask one to believe in this modern rationalistic age! But a little patience and a little careful reasoning, will convince one, of these great truths. According to the *Scientific American* (1923) the age of the present earth was calculated after discussion at 500 million years. Professor Russel (1921) fixed it at 1000 to 8000 thousand million years. Dr. K. S. Krishnan in his recent lecture at the Madras Presidency College on 14—10—41 demonstrated it at 200 crores of years. According to our Vedic, Puranic and astronomical calculations, as set out above, the age of the present earth is put down at 1,955, 885,042 years on 13—4—1941 (1st Chitra Vishu) or 714,404,131,059 days on the said date! Though another class of astronomers has put it at 1960 million 853 thousands and 029 years up to this year. Scientific calculations, and Geological, Archaeological, and Anthropological discoveries are beginning to remove the miasma that surrounds the vision of even some of our own Indian scholars who have been lulled into the belief that Sastras have no scientific foundation, that our Sankalpas and observances, religious and spiritual, are but superstitions and ignorant ordainments born out of degenerate, diseased and decadent imagination. Pity it is that some of the scholars steeped in Modern Education and 'Kultur' with practically little or no knowledge, study or research into our own ancient learning, religion and culture should attempt the

role of the critics and authorities and pretend to pass on their views and opinions little dreaming of the devastating destruction the spread of such ideas may work upon humanity. It is well that they should remember before they ventilate their half baked ideas the injunction of the Lord in the Gita:

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठः तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

The following stanzas from the Dhyana Bindu Upanishad are worth pondering over in this connection.

हकारेण बहिर्याति सकारेण विशत्पुनः ।
हंसहंसेति अमुं मन्त्रं जीवो जपति सर्वदा ॥
शतानि षट्दिवारात्रं सहस्राण्येकं विंशतिः ।
एतद् संख्यान्वितं मन्त्रं जीवो जपति सर्वदा ॥

The "Hamsa" mantra referred to herein is a very exalted Mantra. It goes by the name of "Ajapa Gayatri". The effect of the sound impulse of this "Ajapa Gayatri" is always "Excelsior". These are no mere fantastic assertions. Modern Science has demonstrated and Scientists like Lissajou, Honore and a host of others have proved that musical notes and sound, properly produced in due form and rhythm do generate figures and forms of definite shape, size and attraction. Need we wonder then at the mystic knowledge of the ancient sages who knew the secret and potency of the vibrations of sounds and numbers with which they conjured up the elemental powers of the universe to respond to their prayers, chantings, and invocations?

From the above extract from the Dyana Bindu Upanishad we understand that the Jiva is always uttering this Mantra called 'Hamsa', 'Hamsa', by its going out during the breathing with the letter 'Ha' and coming in again with the letter 'Sa'. Both during the night and the day the Jiva is uttering this Mantra 21,600 times with his 21,600 breathings. This is a physiological, fundamental, self-evident scientifically established

fact and truth in a normal human being. Where the normal is not observed, it is evident he the 'Jiva' is a slave to his 'breath'. The object of the Jiva should be to conquer his breath (Hamsa - Swan) and ride over it at his pleasure and keeping it (Hamsa - Swan - Breath) completely under his control as the Hamsa-vahin Brahma has done. The mystic number 21,600 has to be noted and studied. It is 108×200 times. The number 108 has very great mystic powers. Every god has to be given his Archana with 108 names. The Upanishads are 108 in number. The Stalas of Vishnu are 108 in number. The Pancharatra Samhitas are 108 in number and so on.

The Yugas are again all multiples of this 21,600. The days of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are all again multiples of this 21,600. Above all, and startling as its may seem the L. C. M. of the siderial periods of the various planets noted herein and governing and influencing this planet of "Boo-Loka"—Earth, and which periods run into several places of decimals according to Astronomical calculations, gives the figure 4,320,000,000, again a multiple of 21,600 *the number referred to in the Dhyana Bindu Upanishad!*

According to up to date Medical investigations a normal healthy man has 15 breaths per minute, or in other words 24 Hours $\times 60 \times 15$ breaths or 21,600 breaths!—*the number referred to in the Dyana Bindu Upanishad!*

60	Nadis	—	1 Vinadi
60	Vinadis or	} —	1 Nazhigai
3600	Nadis		
60	Nazhigais or	} —	1 day
21,600	Nadis		
360	days	—	1 year.

Kaliyuga consists of 4,32,000 years. Dwapara Yuga consists of 8,64,000 years. Thretha Yuga consists of 12,96,000 years, and Krita Yuga consists of 17,28,000 years, or a Chathur Yuga or Mahayuga consists of 4,320,000 years. 1000 Mahayugas are

equal to 1 Kalpa or a day of Brahma. 71 Mahayugas are equal to 1 Manvantara and 14 Manvantaras are equal to 1 Day of Brahma without the Sandhis. But one Full day of Brahma or a Kalpa is made up of 14×71 Mahayugas plus the evening and morning Sandhis of 6 Mahayugas or a Total of 1000 Mahayugas or in other words $1000 \times 4,320,000$ or 4,320,000,000 years. 360 such days make one Brahmie Year. 100 such years are a day to Vishnu—and a 100 Vishnu Years make one Siva Year. This *day of Brahma* is stated to be a period when all the Planets return to the same point in the Sun or the first point of Aries at the horizon of Lanka on the Equator and whose Longitude is 76 degrees east from Greenwich and which will be the L. C. M. of the periods of the various planetary motions, being their sidereal periods as follows:—

Mercury	87.9693	days
Venus	224.7008	"
Earth	365.2564	"
Mars	686.9795	"
Jupiter	4332.5848	"
Saturn	10759.2200	"
Moon	27	" 7 hours 45' 11.5"

The L. C. M. of these gives 4,320,000,000 sidereal years—the figure above referred to—i. e. This solar system will exist but for only one Brahmie Day or a Kalpa of our Astronomy.

The mystic link existing between the Mantra 'Hamsa' or as it is otherwise called "Ajapa Gayatri" and the lives of man, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva and the mystic links of the number 108 or 216 or 432 etc can scarcely escape the observant and enquiring soul. Each Manvantara has a fresh Indra, Manu, Sapta Rishis etc. and is followed by a Deluge lasting for one human Krita Yuga submerging the whole earth. An ordinary Yuga is similarly followed by a Deluge submerging only portions of the earth below the Meru or the Himalayas.

Similarly the links that exist between the "Be-ings" and the heavenly bodies and their presiding deities are all scientific truths. Mrs. Marcia Dodwell (Madras) has thus stated in a lecture reproduced in the *Dharma Rajya* 15—7—37—"I, often have a remark like this made to me—"I want to believe that there is a connection between the Planets and the Earth and living beings; all this old wisdom I can not help believing in my heart; but my head tells me it is all nonsense; so, what am I to think?". She answers this question by a reference to two great figures who have contributed so much to the knowledge of man in Science and Spirituality. After referring to Rudolf Steiner's researches, she says that "*the ultimate nature of Matter is not energy but something like Will. When the scientists realise that this Will is the Divine Will, the process will be complete.*" Then Mrs. Dodwell refers to the experiments of Mrs. Kolisko, one of those enthusiastic scientists who proceeded to investigate Rudolf Steiner's theory. The experiments of Mrs. Kolisko were investigations into the relationship between Planets and Metals. Rudolf Steiner has found that Planets exercise marked influence on metals when they are in soluble condition than in solid form. Mrs. Kolisko has proved this by placing pieces of blotting paper in different solutions. When by capillary action the solution rises up in the blotting paper and dries, they leave definite distinct characteristic patterns for gold, tin, silver, etc. Permutations and combinations of these were tried and experimented. It was found that whenever Jupiter and Moon, the two planets corresponding to Tin and Silver respectively are in conjunction or opposition their typical pictures vary. But by next day there were typical pictures of tin and silver. Mrs. Kolisko is also stated to have found that on great religious festivals she procured some very striking patterns from certain solutions.

In this connection a memorable pronouncement of Dr. M. R. Guruswamy Mudaliar may be referred to. In his presi-

dential address in the Scientific Session of the 10th Conference of the Licentiates in Indian Medicine held at Madras (29-12-40) he has stressed the point that Astrology should be made a subject of study for students of Medicine in our Universities. In ringing words he declares as follows:—"Let them (the sceptics) that think the stellar bodies have no influence over men, however realise that the cosmos is a unity, and space and time, as we know them, are illusory, and mystery if still mysterious, becomes at any rate logical. The seed planted in the earth becomes a plant. Why? Is it not a mystery? Why it should do so? It has been such a common - place occurrence that it has not been thought about and does not appear to be a mystery. It appears quite natural. Because the influence of the stars on human beings are not so patent it is considered an impossibility but to the ancients it was a common place affair." "The Hindu" has devoted a notable sub - leader in support of this plea for inclusion of the subject of Astrology, the predictive science *par excellence*, as a subject of study in our University Curriculum. How could one have any doubt as regards the influence of Heavenly Planets and stars upon this Earth and things that are there when we have even ocular demonstration thereof. The connection between the tides and the Moon's progress is too well-known to all. Even the illiterate rustic knows that bamboos when cut during 'Pournima' become rotten and decayed soon; but if cut in Amavasya they endure for a very long period. A quack (?) knows that herbs procured on particular days have varying degrees of effect. How the magnetic needle exhibits minute changes of direction in its efforts to turn towards the sun's direction, varying in its oscillations, has been detailed by R. A. Proctor in his "Other worlds than ours," at page 26. Simultaneously with the appearance of signs of disturbance in the solar photosphere there were magnetic storms upon the earth consequent on the disturbances of the terrestrial magnetism. In one such instance that occurred in 1859 "Telegraphic

communication was interrupted, and at a station in Norway the telegraphic apparatus was set on fire; Aurora appeared both in the northern and southern hemispheres during the night that followed; and the whole frame of Earth thrilled responsively to disturbance which had affected the great central luminary of the solar system.....There is a bond of sympathy between our Earth and the Sun.....Mercury and Venus surely respond even more swiftly and more distinctly etc." (Ibid Ch. III page 30, 31).

These and a thousand other grand truths and the relationship of the microcosm to the macrocosm and their final "ONENESS" constitute the teachings of these Puranas and Upa Puranas with their Panchalakshanas or Dasa - Lakshanas.

STALA PURANA.

This holy Kshetra has a Stala Purana of its own. It is known as *Vrishabhagiri* or *Vrishabadhri Mahatmya* the name *Vrishabhagiri* being the ancient name of these Hills. *Rishaba* is stated to stand for 'OM'. For, after the Deluge that alone remains. According to *Skanda Purana*, *Dharma Devata* or Divine Law also assumes the form of *Vrishabha* or Bull. The composition of this Stala Purana is fundamentally different from that of the other Stalapuranas that we have so far met. For, this Stalapurana is not a single work of a single author, but a congeries of works by various Rishis, collected and arranged in a single work.

In the 1st Chapter we find the Munis of *Naimisharanya* [Some identify this place with the Railway Station called *Nimssr* in *Oudh*] headed by *Saunaka* assembling on a morning after the daily performance of their *Japas*, *Tapas* and *Homas*,

and requesting that Great Pauranika Sri Suta, the Sishya of Sage Vyasa and the holder of the great secrets of the Puranas, to describe to them the greatness of the most famous Kshetra, when he was seated in the Brahmasana. Sage Suta replied:

अहं धन्यतमो विप्रः प्रतिलोम कुलेष्वपि ।

महत्तमानां कृपया दौष्कुल्यमपयाति मे ॥

i. e. O! Ye Sages, though by birth I do not belong to the highest caste, still by the grace of the Great Ones, purged of the *doshas* of birth, I have been raised to the highest scale of Brahmanhood", and having so stated Sage Suta began to expound to the assembled sages the greatness of this Vrishabhadri as far as he knew and was informed. One of the many ways in which the ancient religion of Hinduism was kept alive, was by the institution of Purana Patana of which the greatest protagonist of all times was Sage Suta Puranika. But this is now of late for obvious causes and reasons getting into desuetude.

The work consists of twelve *Adhyayas*. The first and tenth *Adhyayas* are stated to be taken from the Kshetra Kanda of Sri Varaha Purana. The second, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth *Adhyayas* are stated to have been taken from the Kshetramahatmya Kanda of Sri Vamana Purana. The third, fourth, and ninth *Adhyayas* are stated to be taken from the Brahmanda Purana. And from another work called Varaha Sesha Purana are stated to be taken the 11th and 12th *Adhyayas*.

The subjects dealt with in these *Adhyayas* refer to the Mahatmya of the Kshetra and the Vrishabhadri Hills, the Mahatmya of the Noopura Ganga, the Swaroopa Darsana and Vaibava of Sri Sundararaja and the episodes of Brahma, Dharma Devata, the Kinnara and Gandarva Bakta, Markandeya Maharishi, Mandooka Muni, Malayadwaja Pandya, Kubja Pandya, and Ambarisha etc. Interspersed amidst these thrilling chapters we come across the descriptions of

the natural beauty and scenery of these hills such as the description of the Moonlight night at Hills (Slokas 30½ to 37½ Ch. II), the description of the Noopura Ganga (Slokas 57 - 72½ Ch. I.), the description of the Vrishabhadri Hills (Slokas 35½ - 56½ Ch. I). etc. that are real gems in literature. While among the prayers and praises being Stotras addressed to Sundararaja, those by Dharma Raja (S. 65 - 71½ Ch. II), those by Brahma (S. 75 - 94 Ch. V), those by the Gandarvas and Kinnaras (Slokas 10 - 19 in Ch. VII), those by Malayadwaja Pandya (S. 57 - 67 in Ch. X), and those by Sri Suthapas or Mandooka Muni as he came to be known afterwards (S. 1 - 23½ in Ch. XII), are unique and unrivalled in their soulfulness. And above all, the Suguna and Nirguna Brahma Varnana of Sri Mandooka Maharishi (S. 1 - 35 and 85 to 88 in Ch. XII) is full of bliss and ecstatic joy.

It will be futile to attempt to abridge the contents of this charming Stalapurana of 794 stanzas in a short introduction. The original Stalapurana in Sanskrit with a translation in Tamil of the same, for the parayana of the devout Bakta has been published in this Volume. The translation has been attempted to be more in conformity with the original, though at the sacrifice of some of the artistic touches that might have made it more readable. The aim of this publication having been chiefly to make it a daily Parayana Book for the devotees of Sri Sundararaja it has been thought fit and desirable to collect within its compass such of the more important of the other connected works about Sri Sundararaja in this volume.

Sundararaja Kavacham.

With that aim in view a very rare manuscript copy of Sri Sundararaja Kavacham stated to have been revealed to Sri Naradha by Brahma having been made available to me in time, the same has been included in this volume.

Ashtotharas.

Besides, two extant Ashtotharas among the many attributed to the Lord, were also made available to me by the Sthaniks of the Temple. They have also been included in this volume. With regard to the first of these Ashtotharas it has to be noticed that unlike the other Ashtotharas that we come across, in this particular one, each Nama covers a line or one half of a full Anushtub and refers to a distinct scene, idea, episode or description of the Lord. Such kinds of Ashtotharas are extremely rare in the land. These Ashtotharas being intended for devout meditation by the Bakta, in the expectation that it would be made the fullest possible use, it has been especially included in this publication.

Sundara Bahusthavam.

Among the many Vaishnavite Stotra Patas, Mukunda Mala of Sri Kulasekaralwar, Devaraja Astakam of Sri Thirukachi Nambi, the Gadyatrayam of Sri Udayavar and the Panchastavam of Sri Kurathalwar and the other works of Alawandar, Parasara Battar, Nadathure Ammal, Kooranarayana Jeer and Vedacharya Battar are considered to be worthy of daily Parayana. The brightest jewel of them all is stated to be the Sundara Bahustavam among the Panchastavam of Sri Koorathalwar, the foremost Chela of Sri Ramanuja.

Sri Koorathalwar is stated to have resorted to the feet of Sri Sundararaja at the Hills and to have begun to sing of Him in the 232 stanzas of the greatness of the Lord of his heart Sri Sundara Bahu or Sri Sundararaja—and his lost eye-sight is stated to have been miraculously restored here. Sri Koorathalwar's episode is no fable. He was a historical personage that lived but a few centuries ago during the reign of King Kulottunga Chola I (1070—1120). No wonder that every devout Astika whether in happiness or distress finds his peace and solace in the

Parayana of the Sundara Bahustava. Seeing that this publication would have looked a void without this crest-jewel the same has been included herein.

Nalayira Divya Prabhandam.

In this work has also been included the songs poured forth by Sri Peyalwar, Boothathalwar, Nammalwar, Thiruman-gai Alwar, Periyalwar, and Sri Andal in their ecstatic praise of the Lord of their heart, Sri Sundararaja.

Owing to considerations of space, it has not been possible to include in this publication—innumerable other works concerning Lord Sundararaja, such as Alagar Killai Vidu Thuthu, Alagar Pillai Tamil, Alagar Paripadal, Parimel Alagar, Solamalai Kuravanji, etc. etc., all of which praise the Lord and this Kshetra in a thousand ways and tongues. It was not without a pang that I had to omit them now, and reserve them for publication in a future volume or series. I had to content myself with the publication in this volume of such of those works only which were in their nature Puranic and fit for a daily Parayana.

Pre-eminence of this Stala.

The Light Beautiful — The Jyotis of the Upanishads—The Param Jyotis that Seers have seen (Sundatabahustava S. 17, Nammalwar's Thiruvaimozhi I. 3. 3.), manifests in manifold ways for the welfare of the Universe as Param, Vyuham, Vibhavam, Antharyami, and Archa.

i. In Vaikunta, as Sri Narayana with His consorts, He is visible to Anantha, Garuda, Vishvaksena, and other Nitya Muktas (Param).

ii. In Kshirabdhii as Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Anirudha, He is visible to the Devas and the Maharshis. (Vyuham)

iii. In the Dasavataras in this world, He is available to those contemporaries who are blessed to know Him (Vibhava.)

iv. In the hearts of Yogis, and Sidhas He is available to those who strive after Him (Antharyami).

v. For ordinary mortals, He is available for worship in the Temple and other places of worship in Archa Roopa (Archa).

We are now concerned with the 5th class only viz. places in which He has manifested Himself in Archa Avatara. Sri Narayana is stated to be in special Sannidhya in 108 Kshetras. Among these 108, three are considered to be foremost in their greatness. According to Sri Thiruvarangathamudhanar, they are Vaikunta, Venkata, and Malirunjolai; and according to Perundevanar these three are Thiruvengadam, Solamalai, and Thiruvarangam.

தேனோங்கு சோலைத் திருவேங்கட மென்றும்
வானோங்கு சோலைமலை மென்றும்—நானோங்கு
தென்னாங்கு மென்றும் திருவத்தியூரென்றும்
சொன்னவர்க்கு முண்டோ துயர்.

—Barata Venba—Bhishma Parva

But Sri Nammalwar, the greatest of all Vaishnavite Saints, is very emphatic on this head. According to him the Lord is said to be in the fullest Sannidhya in four places: Viz, Vaikunta, Kshirabdhhi, Thiruvengadam and Thirumalirunjolaimalai. Of these four, he compares Vaikunta and Thiruvengada to the body and Kshirabdhhi and Thirumalirunjolaimalai to the head, thereby showing his preference for the greatness of Thirumalirunjolaimalai. cf N. D. P.—Nammalvar Thiruvaimozhi VII. 10—8.

Name of the Stala.

This Kshetra, pre-eminent among the Eighteen Vaishnavite Stalas in the Pandya Nad, is known by many names. A few of the more common ones are the following: Vrishagiri.

Vrishabagiri, Vrishabadhri, Vrishadri, Simhadri (Pre-eminent among the Hills), Kesavadhri, (Hill where Sri Kesava resides) Vanadhri, Vana Saila, Vanagiri, Aranya Saila, Udhyaana Saila (Hill full of Sholas of Trees) and Savanadhri (Hill where Sacrifices and Yagas are ever performed), Irun Kunram, Malirunkunram, Thirumal Kunram (Hill of Vishnu), Alagar Malai (Lord Alagar's Hill), Alangaran Malai (Hill belonging to the all beautiful Lord), Sola Malai, Thirumalirunjolai, Thirumalirunjolaimalai (Hill where resides Thirumal or Vishnu), Thiruvarai, Then Thiruppathi, PazhamudhirSolai, Pazhamudhirsolaimalai, Kula-Boodhara, Sanjivi Parvatha, Sripathi, Darmachala, Thirumalai, Brahma Parvatham, Mandooka Parvatham, Arayan Malai (Periyalwar's N. D. P.) etc. with other mounts as Kulamalai, Kolamalai, Kulirmamalai, Kotramalai, Nilamalai, Neenda Malai, etc.—It may be noted that our tradition is to name our mountains often by the names of the Deities who are in Sannidhya there.

The reason for these Hills being known as Vrishabagiri is stated to be as follows. During the Pralaya, Dharma Devata (Yama or Vrisha) desirous of saving himself from destruction prayed to Vishnu and obtained the boon of bearing the Lord himself on his back. Dharma Devata having a Vrishaba Roopa (Dharma being also a synonym of Vrishaba) these hills were known as Vrishabagiri.

சுரும மோருருத்தாங்கி மால் பத்தியின் றலைப்பட்ட
டொருமை யோங்கிய மாலிருஞ்சோலை சூழ்நாட்டின்
பெருமையாவே பேசுவார்.

Kudal Puranam—Nagarappadalam—1.

Another legend attributed is as follows. When the Jain Manthravadhins exercised their necromancy and sorcery to kill Ananthaguna Pandya by sending an Asura in the form of a cow by the grace of Sri Soma Sundara,

Nandi went against this Maya - Pasu and had it doomed to destruction and this is now the Pasumalai. Nandi left his form behind him as Vrishabagiri — Paranjoti Munivar Thiruvilayadal Puranam.

Situation of the Stala.

In the 1st Chapter of the Stalapurana its boundaries are thus stated:—Ten Yojanas north of Malaya Parvatha, six Yojanas south of the Sahaja, six Yojanas east of Varaha Parvatha, and seven Yojanas west of the Ocean.

These hills are situate 13 miles north-north-east of Madura being between Latitude 10. 3 and 10. 10 and Longitude 78. 12 and 78. 20 and covers an area of about 40 sq. miles. The temple and fort are at the foot of the Hills at a height of about 900 ft above sea level, the highest point of the Hills being about 3000 ft. above the sea level.

Hill itself object of worship.

Here the object of worship is primarily the Hill itself. A mere mention or recitation or pronouncement of the single sacred word "Thirumalirunjolaimalai" is stated to carry with it the highest divine bliss by making realisation of God to him and in him immediately possible. Please see the stanzas poured forth by the great saints Periyalwar, Boothathalwar, Thirumangai Alwar, Peyalwar, Sri Andal, and Nammalwar, in their heart's ecstasies on the Divine realisation by them in the "Nalayira Divya Prabhandams." Out of the 123 stanzas devoted to this temple and Hills more than a hundred stanzas are devoted to the praise of these Divine and sacred Hills mainly.

As Burnett so aptly and clearly put it to those of the modern way of thinking in his famous lectures of 1888, — "God chooses the place for His manifestation, and no mere act of man, nor choice on his part, can constitute a sanctuary, and that the

greatest and holiest sanctuaries are those which according to tradition He had been known to frequent from time immemorial". The reason for the greatness, esteem and veneration in which these Hills are held by the pious world is due to the fact that the Lord was sought here, and that He in His infinite mercy has also manifested Himself to His worshippers here. For the Faithful and the Believing the evidence of His presence in these Hills are unmistakable.

It is the traditional faith of the Hindus, that according to his desires God manifests to him in the place and in the form suitable for his emancipation and spiritual progress. He is consequently believed to have his "Homestead and Domain," as Burnett would put it, in particular spots on the earth's surface, for the benefit of His worshippers and which sanctuary exactly resembles private property. It is His Temple. It is His Sanctuary. It is His Holy residence which man cannot appropriate for his uses. And "no one", as Burnett says, "is permitted to appropriate the soil or make private invasions on the pertinents of His Sanctuary." To the Hindu mind, and to those who understand the Hindu mind, this connection of particular spots with particular Gods is of fundamental importance and is a fact that is at once easily grasped and appreciated.

The Universality of its Sanctity :

The poems of the Alwar saints, practically the whole of them will *each show that the mount itself was considered to be the temple of God*. The following is a sample of such stanzas:

"It is proper only to reach without sloth before the disappearance of youth of growing brightness, Thirumalirunjolai Mount, which is a beautiful temple of prosperity, where abides Thirumal who has surpassing and extraordinary qualities of brightness and which is surrounded by groves of youth".

What is the most noteworthy feature in those 123 stanzas is, that in every one of them this name of "Thirumalirunjolai-malai" is mentioned and then its glories and attributes are afterwards depicted and is always referred to as "*The temple where abides Lord Vishnu*" as the refrain of the songs.

Not only in these ancient works, but also by the later day poets similar references and praises are made. In almost all the 100 stanzas of the "Alagar Anthathi" a work referring to the praises and the glories attributed to the Lord and His Mount, similar references are in abundance. Here are a few examples.

"Do not even the illiterate fools become Muktas (Liberated ones) on the very day they approach Vrishabhagiri"?-30.

"Oh mind! worship the Mount embraced by the moon and which belongs to Him."

"Many will be re-born owing to failure to utter the Japa that "Thirumalirunjolai Mount belongs to the red eyed Mal or Vishnu etc"—58.

"O Mind! our sin will vanish the moment we worship with our eyes this Solai Mount etc... .." 61.

"If we praise Vrishabhagiri which has the beauty of the beautiful Silambaru ... we may obtain the lofty Vaikunta."—76.

The Sri Alagar Hills are an integral and inseparable part of Sri Alagar Temple. Sri Krishna's favourite resort is this, for the reason as Kalambagathar puts it, because this was the 'Vrishaba' hill and Sri Krishna was born in the 'Vrishaba' Lagna. The one cannot exist without the other. Their mutual glory, sanctity and greatness are inseparably interdependant and interwoven as may be seen from the following few points alone amongst others, detailing the importance and sacredness of the Hills.

The ancient Paripadal refers to the fact that people of the time in all the four quarters considered these Hills as the very embodiment of Sri Mahavishnu and were accustomed to *worship the Hills by turning to the direction in which the Hills were situate and offer their prayers* as the Moslem in his prayers turns to the direction where Mecca is situate.

In the 1st Chapter of the Purana (S. 73—79), it is stated that even the Devas wondered at the extreme spiritual efficacy of these Hills and that they used to come in their Aerial cars to witness the Men and the Devas, Women and Goddesses, Rishis and Siddhas, the high and the low, resorting to these Hills and its Thirthas *and losing all sense of distinctions and realising a universal oneness* and all these even by a mere sight and *darsana* of these Hills. How true is this even today!

Natural Scenery.

There are many spots in Thirumalirunjolai entering whereon man forgets himself and begins to feel as if he is in tune with the infinite. Nature here often charms him and dumb-founds him. In certain places he finds himself as if he is glued to the spot or magnetically attracted. The visitor if he is anxious to flee from the cares and turmoils of a warring world of passion and pain, worry and annoyance may experience some calm and peace in such spots like, the Camping grounds in the outer Fort area, the Yatirajan quadrangle facing the western and northern Hills, the North Adi Veedhi facing the Western Hills and Kshetrapalakan Kallu, the Nandavanam in the valley, the Madhavee Mandapam, the Periyalwar Gardens facing the Hills and the Somachchanda Vimana and the terrace and the Vimana area facing the hills on the west and the north.

There are lots of other places also to which the visitor will feel involuntarily attracted. The peace, the quiet, and the calm that slowly but irresistably steals over the visitor.

disarming him of all other worldly thoughts and ideas, excepting the impermeation of a spiritual thrill is one to be experienced in those magnetic areas and words would fail to adequately describe them.

The name of the Lord of these Hills.

Various have been the names of that "Param Jyotis" that has manifested itself here to the welfare of the Universe. Many an Ashtothara and Sahasranama chant them. But the more popular of the names of the Lord are, Alagar (the Lord Beautiful), Alangaran, Vrishadisa, Malalangan, Malai Alangan, Vrishabh-dri-Natha or Solai Malaikkarasar (Lord of the Vrishabhadhri or Solai Hills), Paramaswami (the great Lord), Deiva Sikhamoni, Sundara Raja (King of All Beauty), Sri Bhuj Sundara or Sundara Bahu, Sundara-tholudayan (Lord possessing the most beautiful Shoulders), Sangathazhagan (The beautiful Lord founder of the Sangam), Mayavatharan, Mamayan, Vanchakkalvan, Kallazhagan and a host of other significant names. He was known as Sangathazhagan because it is stated that he was the original founder of the Tamil Sangam Cf. சுத்தத்தமிழ்ப்புலவர் சங்கத்திருப்பிரியான் சார்பு" (அழகர் கலம்பகம் 68), "சங்கத்தழகர் அந்தாதி நடாத்தத் தலைக்கொன்வனே" Alagaranthathi 1st stanza. Though every one of these names is extremely charming and enchanting the Lord seems to delight in his being sung as "Alagar". Could it be because of this that Poet Kamba Nattazhwar has been so constantly praising His avatar as Sri Rama thus "அஞ்சனக்குன்ற மன்ன அழகன்", "அத்தின் அழகன்", "அல்லையாண்ட மைந்தமேனி அழகன்", "மையோ, மாகதமோ மதி கடலோ, மறுமுருகலோ, அய்யோ கிவன் வடிவென்ப தொழியாவழகு யான்" "அகத்துறையழகன்". Could the Poets Kambar and Koorathalwar and others have had in their minds the prowess of the shoulders of the Lord's Sri Ramavatara, when they rapturously sang as "தோன்கண்டார் தோனே கண்டார்" "சுन्दरं सुन्दरुं परमस्वामिनं हरिम्", "सुन्दरायतभुजं भजामहे" etc.

The rapturous and soulful melody with which Sri Godha bursts forth in praise of His beauty in a song when first she sees the Lord along with her father is inimitable. Note every one of the words in the reference in Godha Parinaya:

अलकसुन्दरं आननसुन्दरं नयनसुन्दरं अंशसु सुन्दरं ।
चरणनाभि सरोरुहसुन्दरं विनमतिस्स हरिकरसुन्दरं ॥

And this description was copied by others also Cf. “குழலழகர், கண்ணழகர், வாயழகர், தோளழகர், தாள்ழகர், கொப்பூழின் எழிலழகர், எர்வாங்க ஸந்தகர்” etc. Dazzled by His beauty and brilliance that robs one of his sense of mortal surroundings, the great Nammalwar in his fulness of love and devotion in a Ninda Stuti describes him as “வஞ்சக்கன்வன் மாமாயன்”.

To so fondly describe the Lord of their hearts is a common theme with these transcendental poets. In the Krishna Karnamritha Poet Leela Suka thus describes Sri Krishna.

मायात पान्थ ! पथिभीमरथ्याम् दिगम्बरः कोऽपि तमालनीलः ।
विन्यस्त हस्तोपि नितम्बविम्बे धूर्तस्समाकर्षति चित्तचित्तम् ॥

i. e. Oh thou Traveller (the devout aspirant) do not stray forth along the paths on the Banks of the Bhima, for there roams a thief, a Digambara (an unclad Being), an Unkown Being, Dark Blue as the Tamala leaves, posing both of His hands on his Nithamba (as if in intent and earnest search for His victims) with the object of robbing away their wealth called the Mind (chiththa) of the travellers. Cf. also St. 181-Ch I ibid. Cf also Sri Valmiki's description

रूपौदार्यगुणैः पुंसां दृष्टि चित्ताप हारिणम् ।

and the Tamil proverb “காடற்றிந்த கன்வன் காரணஞவன்” etc. It is a universal truth that “Beauty is Truth and truth Beauty”. Beauty and Truth need no extraneous or adventitious aid for its charms. And nowhere is it more emphatically described than in the oft-quoted stanza of Sri Nammalwar.

"முடிச்சோதியாய் உந்து முகச்சோதி மலர்த்ததுவோ" etc. (N. D. P.)
 "பாஞ்சோதி ி பரமாய் நின்னகழ்த்துபின் மற்றோர். etc." ibid.

The various names of Lord Alagar were no mere formal names to be searched for in dusty canonical records. They were all real, living and powerful names to conjure with as they were. It has been our traditional privilege to name our children and to name our villages after our Lord. The evidence of it could still be seen in this Holy Land. People bearing the names of Alagar, Mayalagan, Solai, Solaimalai, Paramaswami, Sundaram, Sundarabhujam, Sundarabahu, Sundaratholan, are quite common to these days. Similarly are the names of villages such as "Sundaratholvilagam," "Sangathazhaganallure", "Alagar Adi", "Alaga Puri", "Sundararajan Patti", "Alagai-managar," "Alagiya Pandya Nallure," etc. are well known ones. The glory and sanctity of these divine Hills and the Lord of these Hills, is not the theme of any stray work or two, but forms the subject of many an ancient work as may be found in the bibliography referred to in this note. Popular as Sri Sundara Raja or Alagar has been, Temples were erected for him in various places in South India. The Temple of Alagar Sri Sundara Rajaswami at Tadikombu, bearing an inscription of Tirumal Naicker in 1629 A. D. and containing also the best sculpture in the Taluk is well worthy of a visit. The famous Kattu Alagar Temple in Sri Villiputhure, with its Nupura Ganga!, Sathapas!, etc is of very hoary antiquity. Gudalure in the Periyakulam Taluk has also a Temple dedicated to Sri Alagar. Sevilipperi in the Tinnevely District, also known as Ten-Thirumalirunjolai with its presiding deity of Sri Alagar is another popular *stala*. Evidently people that migrated from Thirumalirunjolai have named their new colonies after their original homes.

Adhi Alagar Koil.

In the Taluk of Melure, in Sillappanayakkanpatti Firka, about two miles south of Nattam on the northern slopes of

the Sri Alagar Hills, almost on a line to the North of Sri Alagar Koil and at about a distance of eight miles therefrom, there is situate an ancient ruined temple that goes by the name of Adhi Alagar Koil. The Temple is in an almost completely ruined condition. A few feet south of the central shrine are the ruins of a small shrine stated to belong to Padinettampadi deity. There is also a silted up Pushkarani near by. The local tradition is that this was the original Alagar Koil from which Sri Sundararaja migrated to his present southern shrine centuries ago. The mutilated idol of Sri Sundararaja here is of exquisite beauty and workmanship. The idols of Sri Thayar and an Alwar are in a tolerably good condition. The idol of Sri Anjaneya and a Nagar are somewhat mutilated. This temple area is reputed to contain untold treasures. The stones of the ruined walls of the Temple disclose a number and variety of inscriptions in Grantha and Tamil. These may yield very valuable information to the Epigraphist, if the deciphering is urgently attempted before the stones are lost. The stories current locally about this Temple are soul thrilling. The area where the Temple is situate is highly mystical and magnetic. Until it pleases the great ones to reveal the greatness and sacredness of this extremely holy spot by the necessary resuscitation, renovation and restoration it is not deemed desirable (so say they) that the lay pious should divulge the supernatural experiences felt to prevail here.

The Cosmopolitan Character of this Stala.

One need not wonder at the vast number of names this Holy spot bears and the vast works of literature bearing thereon, for it has been considered as the most sacred and holy spot in all universe resorted to for worship by all classes, castes, and creeds. Here, in this temple, one would see Sri Ganesa, Sri Bairava etc., all aspects of Sri Siva, worshipped side by side with Sri Vishnu. Here, in this shrine both Sri Siva and Sri Vishnu are equally

worshipped and both are held in high reverence. Many a Saivite considers this as one of the six Padaiveedus or sacred haunts of Lord Subramanya. And it is so referred to and alluded to as Pazhamuthir Solai in the ancient Tamil Classics also. So great has been its sanctity and so powerful has been the All-Merciful Lord here, that the praises and glories of "Parama Swami" (The great Lord) which is another name attributed to Him have been sung by diverse saints and in distant ages and have been the theme of many a work and in many a language. The orthodox Saivite and orthodox Vaishnavite worship here feeling absolutely no difference in the aspects of the Lord. Devout Christians like Mr. Rouse Peter (a former Collector of this District), Mr. Robert Fischer, Mr. Robert Foulkes, Mr. Elliott Garrett and a host of other eminent and pious Christians have found comfort and their hearts' solace in the presence of the Great Lord here. These all have presented many a jewel to Lord Alagar. Even the Muslim could not refrain from his quota of worship before this Lord and he too would give his own votive offerings of his "lungis" and the like to this Lord of his heart.

Origin of this Temple.

The origin of this ancient shrine known as Ten-Thiruppathi is shrouded in the mythological past. Sri Periyalwar in 3055 B. C. or about 5000 years ago from now, sings of the glory of the Lord and addresses Him as "மதில்குழி சோலமலைக்கரசே" which means "Oh Thou King of the Solamalai enshrined in a Fortified Temple," thus showing the existence of a fortified temple from 3055 B. C. even. To Sri Dharmaraja and Sri Visvakarma is attributed the Sri Somachchanda Vimana of the Lord. To King Malayadwaja is attributed the fortifications etc. of the temple. References to this great temple are found not only in many a Purana like Brahmanda, Vamana, Varaha, Skanda, etc. but also in the Ithihasas of Sri Ramayana and Sri Mahabharata, as already noted, and also in various other works which all sing of the Great Lord of these divine Hills, and referred to elsewhere.

The earliest known reference to these Divine Hills are found in the songs of Peyalwar and Boothathalwar (C. 4120 B. C.) stanzas 48 and 54 of 11—Thiruvandadhi (N. D. P.). And next to these Saints of Dwaparayuga, come the Alwar saints of the Kaliyuga Viz: (1) Nammalwar (3102 B. C.), (2) Periyalwar (3055 B. C.), (3) Andal (3044 B. C.), and (4) Thirumangai Alwar (2604 B. C.) who have all poured their hearts' ecstasies in memorable poems of melodious music and highest thoughts which now form the daily recitations in their prayers in the Vaishnavite world.

The great world teachers like Sri Ramanujacharya, Sri Sankaracharya etc. have also given forth their spiritual ecstasies in the praise of Lord Alagar. Not only that, even the Royal poets like Ilam Peruvazhudhi, Ilankovadigal etc. who flourished in those distant ages have also sung in praise of the Lord of the Alagar Hills.

Importance of a Stala Yatra to these Hills.

Stalas or Religious Centres are either Swayam Vyaktam or otherwise. Such centres where the *Paramatman* manifests Himself *suo moto*, without any initial invocation as in the cases of *Arsha* and *Manisha Prathishta* centres, are considered to be *Swayam Vyakta Kshetras*. The very name of Thirumalkunram or Thirumalirunjolai is a clear evidence of the fact that this is such a *Swayam Vyakta Stala*. Such *Stalas* are rare and very few. Added to the self manifestation of the *Paramatman* here, it is worthy of note that the Poojas and Aradhanas were performed here by Dharma Devata, Brahma, Indra and other gods innumerable, by all the Rishis of our land, divine and transcendental in their nature, and by almost all the ancient kings mentioned in our Puranas and Ithihasas, not to speak of other exalted saints, seers, and Bakthas among the mortals—who have all created a store of spiritual magnetism in this Kshetra that can scarcely be rivalled. The tradition here is that Indradhi Devatas, Brahma and the Nityasuris do perform their daily

Poojas here in the night to Lord Paramaswami or Alagar after the Poojas by the mortals are over after the daily Ardhajama. Even to this day strange sounds, melodious music and incidents thrilling in their nature and character are stated to be experienced. Herein then lies the truth and cause and significance of the unique influence and unique power of the magnetism of this Kshetra. It is therefore best to remember that Thirumalirunjolai is no holiday resort, or place that has its archaeological and antiquarian relics with interest only for the student and historian whether Indian or International, or a place that exists but to charm the passing tourist with its arresting arts and touching beauties, or as a museum or store house where artistic idols and images are preserved for the connoisseur to gaze at or the vulgar to gibe at, or a centre that generates or nurtures irreligious movements and enterprises. If the aspirant and devotee will just disabuse himself of these notions, and will but remember that this has ever been and is still a great centre of tremendous activity possessing powers and forces that will either attract or repel the incoming pilgrim according to his aims, aspirations and desserts, and if he will but approach this stala in a spirit of reverence and devotion as a true and sincere aspirant, he is sure to be helped to attain the highest *Sreyas* by the ready response, the stored up magnetism of the Kshetra accords him. Let not the aspirant be discouraged by the act of the stray few that thoughtlessly or with other motives decry our religions, deride our philosophy and despise and scorn our Archavatara Worship, little knowing of the consequences of their sacrilegious actions. It is therefore but just, proper and imperative that every *astik* should obey the injunction of the broad hearted Saint Sri Nammalwar in his famous Thiruvaimozhi excerpted below:—

“கிளொராளி யினமை கொடுவதன் முன்னம்
வனொராளி மாயொன் மருவிய கோயில்
வனரினடி பொழில்லும் மாலிருஞ்சோலை
நகர்லிவரலில் சார்வது உதிரே”.